

REMARKS

Claims 1-25 are now pending in the application.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Each of the claims 1-22 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 using a combination of references. Claims 1-7, 9-11, and 23-25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Aoki (U.S. Patent No. 5,610,544) in view of Nunogami (U.S. Patent No. 5,136,191). Claims 8 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Aoki (U.S. Patent No. 5,610,544) in view of Nunogami (U.S. Patent No. 5,136,191) and further in view of Tanaka *et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 6,249,145). Claims 12-22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Aoki (U.S. Patent No. 5,610,544) in view of Nunogami (U.S. Patent No. 5,136,191), Tanaka *et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 6,249,145), Aizaki (U.S. Patent No. 5,115,434) and in further view of LaRue *et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 5,027,007). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejections of claims 1-25.

The office action must provide specific, objective evidence of record for a finding of a suggestion or motivation to combine reference teachings and must explain the reasoning by which the evidence is deemed to support such a finding. *In re Sang Su Lee*, 277 F.3d 1338 (Fed. Cir. 2002). The office action fails to meet this burden. The statements in the office action as to why the combinations would be obvious do not constitute specific, objective evidence of record. They are merely conclusory statements. For example, as to the combination of Aoki and Nunogami, which is required for all of the rejections, the office action, at the bottom of page 2 and the top of page 3, states: "Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the at least one transistor (61, Fig. 3) of Aoki having a threshold voltage greater than or about equal to the difference between the second supply voltage and the first supply voltage as taught by Nunogami in order to transfer a signal without troubles." However, nothing in this statement explains the reasoning that connects the specific, objective evidence of record to the finding of a suggestion or motivation to combine the reference teachings. Note that Fig. 3 of Nunogami (specific

evidence of record) includes the transistor of interest (PMOSFET 11 of Fig. 1 of Nunogami) embedded in a complex feedback circuit, while Fig. 3 of Aoki (specific evidence of record) shows a two-transistor inverter. How does the transistor of interest embedded in the complex feedback circuit of Nunogami suggest an application to a two-transistor inverter circuit? Applicant respectfully submits that the complex feedback circuit of Nunogami does not suggest an application to a two-transistor inverter circuit of Aoki. Hence, the office action fails to meet the standard established by *In re Sang Su Lee* for finding a suggestion or motivation to combine the reference teachings. Thus, the office action fails to state a *prima facie* case of obviousness with respect to claims 1-25. Therefore, applicant requests withdrawal of the rejections and reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-25.

Applicant has reviewed paragraph 5 (Response to Arguments) of the office action and notes that the office action directs the applicant to figure 1 of Nunogami and the corresponding description at column 2, lines 1-4. In response, applicant acknowledges that Nunogami states that the circuit of FIG. 1 can provide "signal transfer without troubles," but applicant also respectfully submits that the application of FIG. 1 of Nunogami is in the "complex" feedback circuit of FIG. 3 and not in the voltage level conversion circuit shown in FIG. 2 of Aoki. Aoki does not indicate that there are "troubles" in the transfer of signals, so there is no motivation to apply the circuit of Nunogami to Aoki.

CONCLUSION

Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are in condition for allowance and notification to that effect is earnestly requested. The Examiner is invited to telephone applicant's attorney at 612-371-2109 to facilitate prosecution of the application. If necessary, please charge any additional fees or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 19-0743.

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